

City of San Diego

Phase II Visitor Oriented Parking Facilities Study of the Old Town Community

Prepared for:

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Final Report

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OLD TOWN VISITOR ORIENTED PARKING FACILITIES STUDY – PHASE II

Executive Summary

1.0 Introduction

Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) was retained by the City of San Diego to provide an assessment of existing parking supply and demand conditions; estimate future parking demand conditions; determine the extent of parking deficiencies; develop a set of practical alternatives to mitigate these deficiencies; and to conduct a conceptual analysis identifying parking program costs and financing techniques to implement parking improvements in the visitor oriented area of Old Town.

The study area (See Figure i.1) consists of approximately 230 acres of historic preserved structures and recreational and commercial attractions including historic buildings, plazas, shops, restaurants, hotels, and offices. The study area also includes single-family and multi-family residential units, the Old Town State Historic Park, Caltrans District office, and the Old Town Transit Center. This report documents our findings.

2.0 Background

Old Town is a visitor-oriented historic, recreational, and commercial community containing the historic site of pioneer settlement of the City of San Diego. Old Town's historic district dates back to 1821 and is the core of a vital recreational, commercial, and tourist area.

Preservation and development of the Old Town community, including both the 10-acre historic core and surrounding commercial and recreational areas, is guided by the Old Town Planned District Ordinance (PDO), which contains special regulations pertaining to property development and permitted uses.

3.0 Existing Conditions

A parking survey was conducted during peak and off peak seasons to determine existing parking characteristics. City staff conducted the field survey during August and November of 2000. Data was collected hourly from 11:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. for weekday conditions and from 11:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. for weekend conditions. Additional parking observations were made between 8:00 A.M. and 11:00 A.M. for both weekdays and weekends. This data was then analyzed to determine turnover, duration, and occupancy for specific Sub Areas of the community (See Figure i.2). These Sub Areas were developed based on characteristics of the community and travel patterns.

There are three primary types of parking supply available to the general public in the Old Town area: 1) On-street public parking spaces, 2) off-street parking in public lots and, 3) valet parking. The majority is provided in the 1,058 off-street public parking lots, which comprise approximately 58 percent of the total parking supply (1,814) in the study area. Approximately 656 spaces (36 percent) are provided in on-street public spaces and approximately 100 spaces (6 percent) are provided by valet service.



— Study Area Boundary

Old Town Community

City of San Diego Visitor Oriented Parking Survey

Figure i.1



- 1** Sub-Area Identification
- Sub-Area Boundary

Old Town Sub Areas

City of San Diego Visitor Oriented Parking Survey

Figure i.2

The largest public parking lot in Old Town, with a capacity of 456 spaces, is the Old Town Transit Center lot located south of Taylor Street between the railroad tracks and Pacific Highway. This lot primarily serves the regional and local transit system and is somewhat remote from the core activity area of Old Town. Other public lots are located along Juan Street and in the northwest corner of the State Historic Park.

Observations and Issues

The observations and analysis of existing parking conditions yielded considerable insight regarding parking characteristics in the Old Town community.

- A) On-street parking occupancy in the primary activity areas generally exceeds practical capacity on both weekday and weekend.
- B) Off-street parking exceeds practical capacity in the lots nearest the State Park Historic Site and near the Caltrans district offices
- C) Parking demand levels in the major activity areas tend to remain high during all survey periods (peak and off-peak, weekday and weekend).
- D) Parking demand levels are highest during the mid-day lunch period and the evening dinner period.
- E) Employees are parking on-street and off-street in public lots in the core area. These employees are occupying prime parking spaces that should be utilized by visitors to the area.
- F) Parking in the transit center parking lot is generally underutilized.
- G) There are many distractions in the area and off-street parking and signage may not be clearly visible to visitors.
- H) There are a large number of vehicles circulating the area seeking more convenient on-street parking spaces.
- I) Vehicles are sometimes parked in restricted zones at curb faces and curb returns.
- J) There are no time limits for most on-street parking areas.

Based on the data analysis and observations there is clearly a parking deficiency throughout the study area. The analysis of existing conditions indicates the need for additional parking facilities in the core area of Old Town, namely Sub Area 3. Off-street surface lots could not accommodate the existing parking deficiencies identified in this area.

4.0 Parking Management Strategies

Parking management strategies help balance parking supply and demand and improve parking efficiency. A number of management, regulatory, and restriping strategies were evaluated and considered for the area, such as:

- Parking Regulations and Zoning
- Posted Time Limits
- Parking Space Striping & Parking Zones
- Parking Enforcement
- Signage
- Residential Parking Permit Program
- Shuttle Service and Satellite/Peripheral Parking Facilities
- Parking Meter Installation

The following highlights some of the key management strategies discussed in the report:

Posted Time Limits

As identified previously, much of the area is without posted time limits. The entire study area was reviewed in comparison to parking duration, turnover and occupancy to determine what changes in posted time limits, if any are needed. On-street time limits should be set to maximize the opportunity for short-term visitor use, while off-street parking facilities should accommodate longer-term parking. Based on this evaluation changes in posted time limits are recommended as described below:

- Post a 2-hour time limit along the following streets: Congress Street, from Taylor Street to San Diego Avenue; Harney Street, from Jefferson Street to San Diego Avenue; and Conde Street, from Jefferson Street to the east end. This change should be re-evaluated after six-months to ensure its effectiveness.
- Post a 3-hour time limit along the following streets: Juan Street, from Wallace Street to Harney Street; and Twiggs Street, from the west end to Congress Street. This change should be re-evaluated after six-months to ensure its effectiveness.

A 2 or 3-hour on-street time limit will force longer-term parkers to use off-street parking facilities, thereby allowing these parking spaces to be utilized for short-term visitors. Time limits in other areas are not recommended at this time because there are insufficient off-street parking facilities available to accommodate longer-term parking. Therefore, posted time limits for all other areas should be re-evaluated as additional parking facilities are provided.

Signage

The lack of adequate comprehensive signage is typically one of the key reasons that off-street parking facilities are underutilized. A comprehensive signage and wayfinding program could increase utilization of off-street parking facilities and increase the availability of on-street parking spaces. Therefore, a comprehensive signage program should be developed to maximize visitor awareness to public parking locations. This could be prepared in conjunction with a community-wide public parking map which would identify all available public parking locations as well as the time limits and parking fees, if any, associated with each of the locations. The program should consider directional signage in advance of the primary entry points to the area and also within the area. The basic idea is to attract the visitor's attention to parking locations before they get to the primary activity corridor.

Shuttle Service and Satellite/Peripheral Parking Facilities

Bus shuttle services from satellite/peripheral-parking facilities are frequently considered as a means to limit the amount of new parking in a downtown or major activity center. Shuttles are most cost-effective when there is a relatively constant stream of potential passengers; a relatively simple route; and the shuttle origination point is a short distance from the destination point. Additionally, satellite/peripheral-parking facilities should be located in areas with efficient access and high visibility. Satellite/peripheral-parking facilities could provide shuttle bus service for employees and visitors alike. The service could operate during peak season and special event periods.

Shuttle operations and maintenance costs can be substantial. Joint use or shared use opportunities should be considered. The concept of utilizing or providing peripheral-parking facilities and bus shuttle service should be evaluated as part of traffic circulation planning efforts for the area.

Two candidate sites have been identified for consideration in the future:

- Old Town Transit Center Lot – MTDB is studying the feasibility of building a large parking structure on this site. The structure would primarily serve the transit center, but it may be possible to have joint use of this facility to also serve future parking for employees or visitors to Old Town.
- Fremont School Site – This site is currently occupied by the school. However, there has been some discussion of relocating the school, which may provide the opportunity to develop the site with parking facilities.

These two sites are not currently within acceptable walking distance for visitors destined for the core activity areas of the Historic District, but employees working in the area may utilize them. These sites could also serve as a shuttle bus service stop. The service could operate during peak season and special event periods. These details are outside the scope of this study, but they merit additional study.

Parking Meter Installation

Parking meters can increase the availability of on-street parking through price differentials and higher turnover. Studies have shown that installation of parking meters increases turnover of on-street parking spaces by about 70 percent. Parking meters force longer-term parkers to use off-street lots. Enforcement of time limits is also simplified by the installation of parking meters, and revenue is generated by the collection of meter fees. However, implementing parking meters can be a very sensitive issue within a community.

The possibility of using parking meters was reviewed in comparison to parking duration, turnover and occupancy. It was determined that their use would not make a significant difference in existing parking supply and in fact may exacerbate deficiencies or increase pressure on prime parking because there are insufficient off-street parking facilities available to accommodate longer-term parkers that would be displaced by the use of on-street parking meters. However, the use of parking meters should be considered as additional parking facilities are provided.

5.0 Future Conditions and Parking Structure Site Analysis

As outlined in the report, a parking deficiency currently exists in the Old Town area. In the future forecast years of 2005 and 2020, demand is expected to increase. The current and anticipated future supply and demand conditions in Old Town would justify the construction of a parking structure, even after the appropriate management measures are implemented.

Reconnaissance was performed throughout the Old Town area to identify candidate sites for the placement of a new parking structure. Two key sites were identified, as follows:

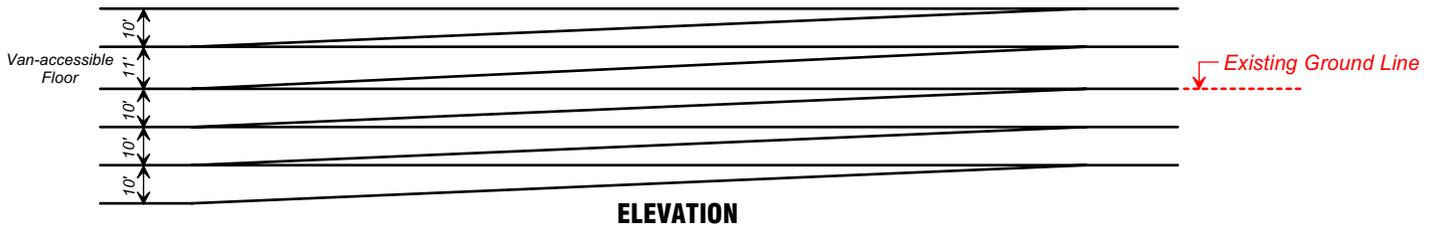
- Twiggs and Congress Street
- Harney and Juan Street

Both potential structure sites are located in Sub Area 3, which exhibits the greatest parking need under existing conditions and both planning horizon years.

Twiggs and Congress Street Site

This site is rectangular in shape with excellent access from both Twiggs and Congress Streets. It currently accommodates 69 parking spaces. The proposed parking structure concept has five parking levels (including rooftop parking), 2.5 levels underground and 2.5 levels at or above ground (including surface level) (See Figure i.3). The total size of the structure (all five levels) would be approximately 173,600 square feet, which provides approximately 540 parking spaces for a net gain of 471 new parking spaces. The parking structure would only be two stories above grade.

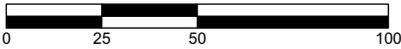
Construction cost of the facility with reasonable amenities (exclusive of property costs, architectural and engineering fees, construction engineering and management, and legal and financing costs) would be approximately \$8,700,000, or \$16,100 per space. When considered on a per-net-new-space basis, the cost is approximately \$18,500 per space.



Approximately 540 parking spaces
(2.5 levels below ground, 2.5 levels at or above ground).



Approximate Scale in Feet



**OLD TOWN
TWIGGS AND CONGRESS STREET SITE
PARKING GARAGE CONCEPT
Figure i.3**

Harney and Juan Street Site

This site south of Twiggs Street is irregular in shape and currently accommodates 173 parking spaces. The proposed parking structure concept has five parking levels (including rooftop parking), three levels underground, one level at grade, and one level above grade (See Figure i.4). Ingress and Egress would be from Harney Street and Juan Street via two access points. The total structure would be approximately 336,400 square feet, which provides approximately 875 parking spaces. Considering the loss of existing parking spaces on the site, the garage would result in a net gain of 702 parking spaces. The parking structure would only be two stories above grade.

Construction cost of the facility with reasonable amenities (exclusive of property costs, architectural and engineering fees, construction engineering and management, and legal and financing costs) would be approximately \$17,500,000. On a per-space-basis, the cost is approximately \$20,000 per space. When considered on a per-net-new-space basis, the cost is approximately \$25,000 per space.

6.0 Financial Planning Techniques

A number of possible funding mechanisms were considered for their applicability to finance parking improvements in the Old Town area, such as:

- Parking Revenue Bonds
- Valet Parking Franchise
- Parking Assessment District Bonds
- Tax Increment Financing
- Public/Private Partnerships
- In-Lieu Parking Fees
- Special Grants and Funding Programs
- Transient Occupancy Tax

The following highlights some of the key funding mechanisms discussed in the report:

Parking Revenue Bonds

Revenue collected from new and/or existing parking facilities is typically used to support the issuance of bonds. However, revenue from a new parking structure is typically not sufficient to cover both the operating costs and the annual debt service for bond payments. In addition, because there are certain risks in depending on the revenues from parking as the sole backing for a bond issue, the bond underwriters will require that revenue from parking exceed the debt service requirement by 50 percent or more. As a result, in order to use parking revenue as a source for funding a parking structure or other major improvement, additional sources of revenue need to be developed. It should also be noted that the City's current policy regarding parking meter revenues is that 45 percent of the revenue collected returns to the community, 45 percent goes to the City's General Fund, and 10 percent is allocated for operations, maintenance, and administration of the paid parking facility.



Approximately 875 parking spaces
 (three levels below ground, one level at grade, and one level above grade).



Approximate Scale in Feet



x



ENGINEERS
 PLANNERS
 ECONOMISTS

Wilbur Smith Associates

**OLD TOWN
 HARNEY AND JUAN STREET SITE
 PARKING GARAGE CONCEPT
 Figure i.4**

Valet Parking Lease and Franchise Programs

The City is exploring the possibility of leasing the right to operate valet parking on City streets in commercial areas. While the City currently licenses valet operators, it does not collect any revenue from this transaction. The opportunity may exist for the City to enter into an agreement with private companies to lease on-street valet spaces and/or to operate a “Valet Parking Franchise.” Under the lease arrangement the City would lease spaces at a rate equivalent to the rate of occupying a metered parking space for a full day. Under the Valet Parking Franchise arrangement the City would solicit competitive bids from companies that could operate valet services for a specified area or community. The qualified high bidder would be awarded a contract to operate a Valet Parking Franchise for the specified area. In return the City would earn revenue from the licensing of the franchise and/or the franchisee’s operations.

The City of Santa Monica is developing a similar leasing arrangement. The Valet Parking Franchise program has not yet been used in California. Old Town may be a candidate for either program, as valet parking for evening and weekend shopping, restaurant, and entertainment activities could be popular. The revenues from this program could be used to help support the construction and/or operation of new parking facilities. Based on current valet services within the Old Town area, the City could possibly receive between approximately \$21,900 and \$30,700 annually under the parking space lease agreements.

Parking Assessment District Bonds

An assessment district is a mechanism where the property owners within the district boundary agree to assess themselves through property taxes to fund the desired parking improvements. A two-thirds approval vote is required of all the property owners in the district, with the vote based on the assessed valuation of the property. The assessment is limited to the benefits conferred and fees and charges are limited to the cost of providing the service. Very strong property owner support is required to set up such a district. The fact that much of the land is part of the State Park or is owned by Caltrans may make forming a parking district difficult, as these lands could not be part of the district.

Transient Occupancy Tax

Another general source of funding to support the parking improvements in Old Town could be an increase in the City’s Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT). A substantial amount of parking in Old Town is related to visitor activities. This funding mechanism should be evaluated in further detail.